



**RCA
CITY OF AUSTIN
RECOMMENDATION FOR COUNCIL ACTION**

AGENDA ITEM NO.: 9
AGENDA DATE: Thu 09/02/2004
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SUBJECT: Approve the "Plan to End Chronic Homelessness In Austin/Travis County" in response to a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development initiative.

AMOUNT & SOURCE OF FUNDING: There is no City funding associated with this action.

FISCAL NOTE: N/A

REQUESTING Health and Human
DEPARTMENT: Services

**DIRECTOR'S
AUTHORIZATION:** David Lurie

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Vince Cobalis, Assistant Director for Human Services, 972-5011; Mary Rychlik, Homeless Services Coordinator, 972-5027; Linda Terry, Agenda Coordinator, 972-5023

PRIOR COUNCIL ACTION: N/A

BOARD AND COMMISSION ACTION: N/A

PURCHASING: N/A

MBE / WBE: N/A

Background:

Austin's plan to end chronic homelessness ("Ending Chronic Homelessness in Austin/Travis County") was developed to support the federal government's decision to address the challenge of ending chronic homelessness. In 2001, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced they had established the goal of ending chronic homelessness within a decade.

The federal government's new emphasis on ending chronic homelessness was based on research conducted in New York City. First, the research showed that chronically homeless individuals represented only 10-15% of the total homeless population but consumed over half of all homeless assistance resources. Second, model programs tested throughout the U.S. have found that when chronically homeless individuals are provided with adequate housing and support services, as many as 80% remained in the housing and maintained a high level of self-sufficiency.

As part of HUD's initiative, local communities were charged to develop their own plans to end chronic homelessness. Austin's plan was drafted by a committee of the Homeless Task Force (HTF) with the help of the Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department (HHSD) and JP Results Consulting. This plan was developed with broad community representation, including service providers, homeless and formerly homeless persons, business representatives, local government entities, local policy makers, and representatives of the faith community. The recommendations of this plan follow the guidelines of the National Alliance to End Homelessness, considered a national model for plans to end chronic homelessness. No federal allocation is available at this time; however, federal funding opportunities to address chronic homelessness are anticipated. When such funding becomes available, the fact that Austin



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has an existing Council-approved plan will improve the likelihood for funding. In some cases, current funding is already being refocused to help address this important issue. For example, the City has greatly expanded the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH) programs that primarily serve chronically homeless persons and the City has identified Emergency Shelter Grant Program (ESG) funding for a position to assist chronically homeless persons to obtain benefits for which they are eligible.

Austin/Travis County is home to an estimated 3,789 homeless individuals on any given day. Approximately 600 of them meet the HUD definition of chronically homeless: "an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, OR has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years." Chronically homeless individuals comprise many of the people visible on Austin's streets and represent one of the most challenging subpopulations of homeless persons to assist.

Some facts about homelessness:

- Main factors contributing to homelessness include a lack of affordable housing, insufficient income, and a shortfall of public services.
- Many persons have fallen into homeless situations after being discharged from a public institution or after leaving the foster care system because they lacked housing and ongoing support.
- Homeless persons frequently use emergency rooms and hospitals for primary health care.
- An increase in the number of people exiting jails and prisons means more people are re-entering their communities. Adequate discharge planning and affordable housing stock are vital to preventing those individuals from becoming homeless.

Austin's plan considers all these factors and provides detailed, coordinated strategies to build a better infrastructure and help homeless individuals achieve self-sufficiency. A Homeless Task Force Working Group is in place and a Subcommittee will be created to oversee ongoing planning and implementation of these strategies. The Subcommittee will include representatives from the CAN Resource Council and Administrative Team. It will be expanded beyond the CAN membership, when needed, to address all the issues that impact chronic homelessness.

The local plan attacks chronic homelessness in four categories:

- Development of plans to end, rather than manage, chronic homelessness by developing better data on local chronic homelessness, conducting a pilot study, and conducting outcome evaluations.
- Improve discharge planning for individuals exiting public institutions, investing in long-term prevention by supporting families, and providing adequate substance abuse and mental health treatment.
- Provide adequate affordable housing with services, helping homeless individuals access income and employment, providing services using a "system of care" approach, and increasing outreach to



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individuals with chronic substance abuse and mental health problems.

- Build the infrastructure to address the systemic problems that lead to poverty and homelessness. This task can be accomplished through removing barriers that prevent chronically homeless individuals from obtaining housing, services, and public benefits and engaging in the community.

Performance Measures:

The plan provides target goals for multi-partner accomplishment. Below are measures in the HHSD FY05 Business Plan most closely related to ending chronic homelessness.

Related Goals:

Prevention/Provision: Social Services - Promote and foster increased self-sufficiency, healthy behaviors, and lifestyle among targeted populations.

Outputs

Number of homeless persons receiving transitional housing	477
Number of homeless persons receiving case management and supportive services who move into safe and stable housing	721

Outcomes

Percent of homeless population receiving transitional housing	13%
Percent of homeless persons who move into safe and stable housing (as a result of case management & supportive services)	70%

Requested Council Action

Approve the "Plan to End Chronic Homelessness In Austin/Travis County" in response to a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development initiative.